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Dean Ross Leads Two Colleges into the 21st Century

BRETT KIRCH[†]

The start of the twenty-first century has seen some changes in the College of Agriculture. In August of 1998, Dean David Topel announced he was stepping down as the Dean of the College of Agriculture. He had agreed to stay on as acting head of the College of Agriculture until a suitable

replacement was found, but due to family medical considerations, Dean Topel resigned from the position.

Provost Rollin Richmond announced that effective February 1, 2000, Dean Richard Ross would become the Interim Dean of

the College of Agriculture in addition to his duties as the Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine. He will remain in the dual role until a replacement is found for the College of Agriculture. Dean Ross estimates that he will be dean of both colleges from three months to a year, depending on the pace of the search. Dean Ross indicated that Dean Topel will be missed, and that the College of Agriculture, ISU, and the state of Iowa are stronger as a result of his efforts.

The two roles being filled by Dean Ross are very similar in nature. The College of Agriculture contains 17 departments and about 350 faculty positions and covers diverse areas of agricultural science. His duties for both colleges include academic coordination, tenure and promotion

considerations, and hiring for vacant positions. A major part of the dean's responsibilities are budgetary considerations for the colleges. Dean Ross indicated that one of the early challenges of taking the additional role was dealing with the College of Agriculture budget. One priority is the promotion and development of the Plant Sciences Institute, which will offer many new opportunities in plant sciences, especially in the area of biogenetic products.

Other areas of focus Dean Ross indicated for the College of Agriculture were efficiency of the department, sustainable agriculture, and the quality of rural life. Dean Ross indicated that currently his time is split with 60% of his time being utilized in the College of Agriculture. The duplication of duties has lengthened his work day and has shifted the responsibilities of certain duties to the associate deans of both colleges.

Despite the additional duties, he indicates the opportunities to facilitate cooperation between the College of Agriculture and College of Veterinary Medicine is very valuable. For example, the ability to cross coordinate efforts of the Water Resources Institute will provide opportunities for veterinary medicine faculty to assist in making progress in various water issues affecting Iowa and the world.

Dean Richard Ross is originally from Washington County, Iowa where he grew up on the family farm. He entered Iowa State University in 1953 and graduated with a DVM in 1959. In 1965, he completed a Ph.D. in microbiology. He then went into research, working primarily with swine diseases. He indicated that the process of discovery and problem-solving is what attracted him to veterinary medicine and research. ♦

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